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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 005381

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SUBJECT: KUWAIT MEDIA REACTION, NOVEMBER 20-23: ISTANBUL
BOMBINGS; PRESIDENT BUSH IN UK; WORLD JERUSALEM DAY; JANE
FONDA AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

REF: KUWAIT 05317

1. SUMMARY: All media report condemnation by Kuwait's Council of Ministers of the November 20 bombings in Istanbul, although editorial commentary has not yet caught up with the event during this late-Ramadan period in Kuwait. In regard to the November 15 attack against a synagogue in Turkey, one Islamist writes churlishly that "despite the Jews' aggressive and ill-mannered nature. we condemn the attacks in Turkey."

One writer links the protests in London surrounding President Bush's visit to "hatred of American's policy of suppression," but little else on the POTUS speech in London has appeared. The occasion of World Jerusalem Day this week inspired one or two formulaic denunciations of Israel and Zionism.

A high-ranking Ministry of Education official denies that female students were expelled on November 18 for not wearing the headscarf (reftel), but rather for not wearing the "school uniform," adding that "we cannot force women to wear the headscarf." A prominent liberal writer calls the expulsions "intellectual terrorism."

On the news pages, Al-Watan published an interview with Jane Fonda in which she reportedly stated her willingness to come to Kuwait "if Kuwaiti women needed her support" in their efforts to secure political rights. END SUMMARY.

2. News stories: All papers report a strong condemnation of the November 21 blasts in Istanbul at the British Consulate and HSBC Bank by Kuwait's Council of Ministers (Cabinet).

Six NGOs issued a statement denouncing the expulsion of schoolgirls for not wearing headscarves, first reported in local media on November 18(reftel), as "an act in violation of the values of tolerance and freedom," Al-Qabas reports.

On November 24, all newspapers report that Assistant Undersecretary for Education Dr. Hamoud Al-Sadoon stated that the students were not expelled for failing to wear the headscarf, but rather for not wearing the "school uniform." He added, "We cannot force women to wear the headscarf."

Al-Qabas reports that Kuwaiti security forces were placed on alert on November 20 after receiving information of a group of terrorists intending to infiltrate into Kuwait to carry out attacks.

Al-Qabas reports that Islamist MP Waleed Al-Tabtabei attacked Kuwaiti secularists by accusing them of "Westernizing women under the pretext of liberating them," in an interview with a Qatari newspaper. He added that Islamists in the National Assembly support women's rights, but are against "the exploitation of women."

In an interview with Al-Watan newspaper, actress Jane Fonda urges Kuwaiti women to continue their efforts to obtain their political rights, adding she is willing to come to Kuwait if Kuwaiti women need her support.

Islamist MP Dr. Hassan Jowhar stated during the First Annual Jerusalem Conference in Kuwait, "It is a joke to say that America is a broker of peace" between Israel and the Palestinians.

Editorials:

3. "Bush at World Jerusalem Day"
Shiite former MP Abdelmohsen Jamal wrote in independent Al-Qabas (11/22): "The visit of President Bush to Britain coincided with World Jerusalem Day, the anniversary which Iranian President Khomeini called for prior to his death. While we witnessed demonstrations against Bush in Britain, other demonstrations were also taking place to condemn the

Zionist entity. Bush's visit to Britain has revealed the extent of the hatred held by many people toward the policy of suppression by the US administration."

14. "Intellectual Terrorism"

Liberal Director of the Center for Future and Strategic Studies at Kuwait University, Dr. Shamlan Al-Essa wrote in independent Al-Seyassah (11/24): "There is a link between the expulsion of the unveiled schoolgirls and terrorism in the Gulf region. What happened in Kuwait is intellectual terrorism and what took place in Saudi Arabia is terrorism and violence. However, intellectual terrorism is the most dangerous type of terrorism practiced by political Islamists. What happened in Kuwait is clear proof that religious groups opposed to pluralism and tolerance dominate the Ministry of Education."

15. "Jerusalem Day: It is Time for People to Speak Out"

Amna Al-Mussawi wrote in independent Al-Rai Al-Aam (11/21): "[World Jerusalem Day] has become the only hope for Arabs to express their opinions towards Jerusalem. Israel's efforts to obliterate the Palestinian cause could not occur without full American support for the Zionist State."

16. "Why Did They Triumph Over Arabs?"

Islamist Salafi Dr. Wael Al-Hassawi wrote in independent Al-Rai Al-Aam (11/20): "In spite of the Jews' aggressive and ill-mannered nature, they have dominated the world's economy and media, making them the most effective lobby in the Western world. In spite of this, crimes committed against synagogues in Arab and Islamic countries are unjustified and therefore we condemn the attacks in Turkey."

17. "Anti-Semitism"

Adnan Zaid Al-Kazemi wrote in independent Al-Watan (11/23): "Zionism has strived to use the term 'anti-Semitism' against those who oppose its ideology. [T]he recent polls conducted in Europe [reflecting a belief by some that Israel is the greatest threat to world peace] were a slap in the face for America and its bastard child, Zionism. To call someone anti-Semitic is the same as calling someone anti-Zionist, and no one accepts these accusations any longer."

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